

*To the Honorable the General Assembly of the State of North-Carolina.*

GENTLEMEN,—In obedience to a resolution adopted at the last General Assembly, I have endeavoured to procure such information in relation to a Penitentiary and a Lunatic Asylum, as would be useful to you in determining upon the best plan for those institutions. The information received will be found in the pamphlets and letters herewith transmitted.

In regard to a penitentiary, it seems to be universally admitted, that the system pursued in the penitentiaries in the United States, until within a few years, was not only inefficacious for the purposes for which it was intended, but was productive of much positive evil.

The indiscriminate association of the prisoners, the old with the young, the hardened experienced offender with the novice in guilt, afforded opportunities, which were not neglected, of instruction in crime and of combined schemes of villainy, to be executed when the terms of imprisonment expired. To remedy these evils, and others of perhaps not less magnitude, different plans have been proposed. By some, solitary confinement by night and day, with labor performed in the cells; and by others, solitary confinement by night and during such portions of the day as are not devoted to labor in the shops, and to meals, and a strict superintendence of the keepers, to prevent communication between the convicts either by signs or conversation while they are collected together. The latter plan has been adopted at the Auburn prison in the State of New-York, which has served as a model to many of the Eastern States. The two former plans are now in a course of experiment in Pennsylvania, and perhaps in some other States. You will find the relative merits and defects of these plans, discussed at length and with great ability in the pamphlets now sent, together with information as to the cost of erecting a penitentiary, according to the plan you may prefer.

The accompanying draft of the necessary buildings was procured from Mr. Strickland, and is upon the plan which seems to be preferred at present in Pennsylvania.

I also transmit to you a letter from Doctor James Mease, of Philadelphia, who is the author of some of the pamphlets, and who has politely rendered me the most valuable assistance in my inquiries.

Accompanying this communication is a plan of the Lunatic Asylum, near Frankfort, in Pennsylvania, which is under the management of the society of Friends, and which is highly spoken of. Its erection cost about forty-seven thousand dollars; a particular description of this institution, its system of management, and an account of its annual receipts and expenditures, are contained in the several reports of the managers herewith sent, and afford all the information desired on the subject.

The idea of uniting a Penitentiary and a Lunatic Asylum in the same edifice, which seems to be implied in the resolution of the last session, appears to me so abhorrent to humanity, and so irreconcilable to the totally different nature and object of the two institutions, that I am satisfied it must have been introduced through mere inadvertence.

I have the honor to be gentlemen, your obedient servant,

JAMES IREDELL.

*Executive Office, Dec. 2, 1828.*

On motion, ordered that the said message and accompanying documents be sent to the Senate, with a message proposing that they be referred to the select joint committee on the Penitentiary and Lunatic Asylum.

The House then, on the motion of Mr. Borden, adjourned until to-morrow morning, 10 o'clock.

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THURSDAY, DECEMBER 4, 1828.

A message from the Senate, informing that they had passed the engrossed bill to restore William Ferrell, of Montgomery county, to credit, and the engrossed resolution in favor of Benjamin King; and asking the concurrence of this House.

The bill to restore William Ferrell, of Montgomery county, to credit, was read the first time and passed.

The resolution in favor of Benjamin King, was read, and, on the motion of Mr. Wyche, referred to the committee of Claims.

A message from the Senate, proposing to refer the bill to appropriate thousand hundred dollars for improving the navigation of Cape Fear river below Wilmington, accompanying the message, to a select joint